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White House Disputes Assertion Of Reagan Frailty After Shooting

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 Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 28 — The White House took issue today with assertions in a new book that President Reagan recovered slowly from his gunshot wound in 1981 and that the President's staff covered up the true nature of his weakened condition.

The chief White House spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater, told reporters that in fact the President had "recovered rather quickly" from the wound he suffered in the assassination attempt on March 30, 1981.

In addition, Mr. Reagan's physician at the time, Dr. Daniel Ruge, told The Associated Press today that the President's recovery was "superb." Mr. Reagan was discharged from the hospital on April 11 and had resumed public appearances by the end of the month.

Excerpts from the book, "Veil: The Secret Wars of the C.I.A.," by Bob Woodward of The Washington Post, describe Mr. Reagan as weak and disoriented in the days after he returned to the White House from the hospital. According to this description, the President's closest advisers were "gravely concerned" but were "intent on pro-

tecting this terrible secret."

Mr. Fitzwater also said that Mr. Reagan wanted to call William J. Casey, the former Director of Central Intelligence, after Mr. Casey was hospitalized with a malignant brain tumor but that the President could never do so because Mr. Casey could not speak on the telephone.

That statement tended to corroborate the assertion Sunday by Mr. Casey's widow, Sophia, that Mr. Casey could not speak after his seizure and that Mr. Woodward thus could not have interviewed him in the hospital. Mr. Casey collapsed and was hospitalized last December and died in May.

Mr. Woodward maintains in the book that he entered the hospital room and that Mr. Casey spoke several sentences before falling asleep. According to this account, which gave no date for the interview, Mr. Woodward asked Mr. Casey whether he knew that money from the Iran arms sales had been diverted to the Nicaraguan rebels, and Mr. Casey nodded in assent. Then, Mr. Woodward writes, he asked "Why?" Mr. Casey is said to have responded, "I believed."